

Homeowners can apply for new energy efficiency rebates, incentives

Energy Upgrade California program seeks to retrofit thousands of homes and create green jobs

By Sylvie Belmond
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Local homeowners who want to reduce their energy costs but have delayed home upgrades because of the expense can now take advantage of a state program that could save thousands of dollars. Through the Energy Upgrade California program, homeowners in Los Angeles County who make energy-saving upgrades to their homes can qualify for rebates and financial incentives of up to \$4,500 and save money on their monthly utility bills.

A kickoff event to introduce the program to residents was presented last weekend by State Sen. Fran Pavley (D-Santa Monica) and Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky at Las Virgenes Municipal Water District headquarters in Calabasas. Green industry specialists and representatives from utility companies and the government provided information. “We’re reaching out to people who need more information and are motivated by cost savings to help them save funds and protect the environment,” said Melinda Barrett of the Los Angeles County Office of Sustainability.

Qualified improvements include insulation, sealing, heating and air conditioning upgrades, energy-efficient windows and tankless water heaters. The program offers two options.

The basic upgrade package consists of seven measures that can reduce a home’s energy consumption by an average of 10 percent. The basic package offers a fixed incentive of \$1,000.

An advanced package creates a customized upgrade for each home based on an energy assessment. The incentives range from \$1,250 to \$4,500, depending on how much homeowners spend and the type of projects they do.

Homeowners who achieve 20 percent energy savings or more may also qualify to receive an additional \$1,500 through a summer rebate program offered by the county. The added county incentive will expire on Labor Day.

Enhanced options, such as solar power and green building technology to achieve more energy savings, are not eligible

for utility incentives. But they may qualify for some rebates or incentives available from other sources, Barrett said. The new program emphasizes a “whole house” approach, touting it as the most efficient and effective way to save money on

People can qualify for up to \$4,500 in rebates

energy bills and to qualify for the maximum rebate available. “The bottom line is, existing buildings contribute a lot to our energy use and greenhouse emissions,” Barrett said. Even homes built in the 1990s could benefit from the upgrades, she said.

The collaboration between government agencies and utility companies aims to retrofit up to 18,000 homes with an average 20 percent reduction in energy use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

If the program is successful, organizers said it could create about 2,000 green jobs in the county and eliminate about 20,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide greenhouse gas emissions.

The air quality improvement would be equal to planting about half a million trees. Jeff Reinhardt, spokesperson for Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, which has been promoting water conservation, said the new program will provide considerable benefits. “The key element of this is a homeowner can qualify for up to \$4,500 in rebates for a modest energy reduction in their home,” said Reinhardt, who recently spent \$10,000 to replace windows at his residence.

To be eligible for the rebates and incentives, upgrades must be performed by an approved contractor listed on the EnergyUpgradeCA.org website. The statewide energy efficiency program involves the California Energy Commission and Public Utilities Commission, utility companies, local governments and the private sector.

Funding comes from multiple American Reinvestment and Recovery Act sources and a California Energy Commission discretionary grant. Energy Upgrade California in Los Angeles County is ad-

ministered and overseen by an alliance, which includes Southern California Edison and Southern California Gas Company. The program may expand later to offer incentives for commercial

and multifamily property owners, Barrett said. For more information about the program, visit www.EnergyUpgradeCA.org or call (877) 785-2237.



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Tropical Daze music festival will be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sat., and Sun., July 23 and 24 at the Thousand Oaks Community Center, 2525 N. Moorpark Road.

Proceeds will be donated to First 5/Conejo Valley Neighborhood for Learning, a nonprofit early education organization.

Tropical Daze features live music, primarily surf, Hawaiian, Caribbean, Jamaican and reggae.

The event includes children’s activities, arts and crafts vendors, science displays, and game and food booths. Admission is free.

For more information about the festival, visit the website www.tropicaldaze.org.



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